

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2654

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEGUCIGALPA 1164

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SPOP

SUBJECT: IMPLICATIONS OF WORLDWIDE POPULATION GROWTH FOR UNITED STATE

S

SECURITY AND OVERSEAS INTERESTS

REF.: (A) STATE 297241, (B) STATE 301427

AS A BACKGROUND TO THE COMMENTS PROVIDED BELOW, IT SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD THAT AID IS PRESENTLY DEVELOPING A PROGRAM FOR COLLABORATION WITH THE MOH FOR PENETRATION OF RURAL AREAS WITH PRIMARY HEALTH CARE. USAID PROPOSES TO ASSIST THE MINISTRY WITH ITS PLANS TO PROVIDE FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES FREELY TO THAT 70 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION LIVING IN RURAL AREAS: THE GOH CONSIDERS THESE SERVICES THE RIGHT OF ALL COUPLES WISHING THEM AND THAT THE MOH HAS THE BASIC RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE THEM AND INFORMATION CONCERNING FAMILY PLANNING AVAILABLE TO COUPLES DESIRING IT. THE USAID CONSIDERS ITS ASSISTANCE TO THE MOH AS ESSENTIAL IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NATIONAL BASE AND A DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR CONTROL OF FERTILITY FROM WHICH EVENTUALLY TO OMPLEMENT A SPECIFIC DEMOGRAPHIC POLICY WHEN SUCH HAS BEEN ADOPTED BY THE GOH. RESPONSES BELOW ARE KEYED TO ITEMS 4A THROUGH 4G OF REFTEL.

1- GOH BASIC POPULATION POLICY

HONDURAS HAS NO FORMAL POLICY IN THE SENSE THAT THE GOH EITHER RECOGNIZES THE NEED FOR, OR DESIRES TO BRING ABOUT

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A DECLINE IN FERTILITY, FOR ANY REASONS OTHER THAN THOSE WHICH

MIGHT BE ASSOCIATED WITH GENERAL HEALTH; AND IT HAS NO POLICY FOR ACHIEVING A DECLINE IN POPULATION GROWTH RATES. PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF THE HONDURAN POPULATION DYNAMIC OFTEN REFLECTS THE PERCEPTION THAT MORE HONDURANS ARE NEEDED TO POPULATE EMPTY SPACES AND SPECIFICALLY THOSE TERRITORIES THAT MIGHT OTHERWISE BE A TARGET FOR SALVADOREAN EXPANSION. IN HONDURAS THE ABSENCE OF AN ORGANIZATION SUCH AS THE DEMOGRAPHIC ASSOCIATIONS OF EL SALVADOR AND COSTA RICA AND IN OTHER COUNTRIES, THERE IS LITTLE POSSIBILITY FOR INFORMED PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF THE NATIONAL POPULATION DYNAMIC. VIEWS OF NATIONAL LEADERS AND NATIONAL ATTITUDES TEND TO REFLECT POLITICAL AND EMOTIONAL POSITIONS UNRELATED TO DEMOGRAPHIC REALITIES.

2- ASSESSMENT OF GOH POPULATION PROGRAM IN TERMS OF COST EFFECTIVENESS IN PROMOTING FERTILITY DECLINE. (REPLY: SEE PARA 1 ABOVE).

COMMENTS ON PROGRAMS WHICH DESERVE INCREASED U.S. SUPPORT: AS INDICATED ABOVE, HONDURAS HAS NO POPULATION PROGRAM WITH THE OBJECT OF PROMOTING FERTILITY DECLINE FOR DEMOGRAPHIC PURPOSES. HOWEVER, THE GOH SUPPORTS THE FREE AVAILABILITY OF FAMILY PLANNING AS A PART OF ITS NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR PROVISION OF PRIMARY HEALTH CARE (WHICH IS ONLY MINIMALLY AVAILABLE AT THE PRESENT TIME). AID SUPPORTS THE MOH PROGRAM FOR PENETRATION OF RURAL AREAS WITH PRIMARY HEALTH CARE INCLUDING FAMILY PLANNING. SPECIFICALLY, AID ASSISTANCE WOULD STRENGTHEN THE CAPABILITY TO TRAIN PARA-MEDIC PERSONNEL IN THE PROVISION OF FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES AND WOULD ASSURE CONTRACEPTIVE SUPPLIES. WHILE FAMILY PLANNING IN THE HEALTH CONTEXT WILL NOT NECESSARILY IN ITSELF REDUCE POPULATION GROWTH RATES, IT IS OUR VIEW THAT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR EXTENDING FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES IN THE HEALTH CONTEXT SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED IN ANTICIPATION OF ITS EVENTUAL NEED IN IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES WITH DEMOGRAPHIC OBJECTIVES. WITH REGARD TO THE LATTER, USAID HAS REQUESTED EXPERT CONSULTANT SERVICES FROM THE OFFICE OF POPULATION TO PROVIDE ORIENTATION FOR GOH LEADERS IN TERMS OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE COUNTRY'S PRESENT POPULATION DYNAMICS AND THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL POPULATION POLICY AND PROGRAM.

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3- (RESPONDS TO PARAS 4C AND 4D)
WITH AN ANNUAL POPULATION GROWTH RATE OF 3.5 PERCENT HONDURAS WILL DOUBLE ITS POPULATION IN 21 YEARS, FROM AN ESTIMATED 3,000,000 AT THE END OF 1975 TO 6,000,000 IN 1996. ALTHOUGH THE RECENT FLAT RATES OF GNP GROWTH ARE AT LEAST IN PART THE PRODUCT OF A SERIES OF NATURAL DISASTERS, THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE FUTURE OF GRIM IN TERMS OF ACCUMULATION OF ECONOMIC RESOURCES TO MATCH THE DEMAND OF RAPID POPULATION

GROWTH, MUCH LESS TO PROVIDE SURPLUSES FOR HIGHER PER CAPITA INVESTMENT IN THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDED TO IMPROVE INCOMES AND STANDARDS OF LIVING. INDEED, PRESENT PROSPECTS ARE FOR INCOME DISTRIBUTION TO BECOME MORE INEQUITABLE FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT 47 PERCENT OF POPULATION IS UNDER 15 YEARS OF AGE, AND THIS GROUP WILL BECOME A MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION IN THREE TO FOUR YEARS REGARDLESS OF ANY PREDICTABLE DECLINE IN GROWTH RATES. UNEMPLOYMENT, ALREADY HIGH, WILL INCREASE AS MORE PEOPLE ENTER THE LABOR MARKET, EXERTING DOWNWARD PRESSURE ON LEVELS OF WAGE AND REDUCING THE POSSIBILITY FOR ACCUMULATION OF SAVINGS.

AS THE POPULATION BECOMES YOUNGER AND DEPENDENCY RATIO BECOMES GREATER, DEMANDS ON THE GOVERNMENT FOR IMMEDIATE SERVICES MAY BE EXPECTED TO INCREASE, PARTICULARLY IN THE AREAS OF HEALTH SERVICES, EDUCATION AND ITEMS OF BASIC CONSUMPTION THEREBY REDUCING THE POTENTIAL FOR GOVERNMENTAL INVESTMENT IN LONG TERM PROGRAMS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT. AS FERTILITY IS HIGHER IN RURAL COMMUNITIES AND AS RURAL PER CAPITA INCOME IS LOWER THAN IN THE CITIES, THE PROCESS OF RAPID URBANIZATION THROUGH MIGRATION TO URBAN AREAS-- ALREADY CREATING LARGE, LOW INCOME COMMUNITIES WITH UNSKILLED WORKERS AND HIGH RATES OF UNDEREMPLOYMENT IN THE PRINCIPAL CITIES -- MAY BE EXPECTED TO ACCELERATE, CONTRIBUTING TO A DETERIORATING SOCIAL SITUATION AND CREATING CONDITIONS WHICH MAY BE FAVORABLE FOR THE GROWTH OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY. TO SOME EXTENT, THE GOH HOPES TO COUNTER THESE TRENDS THROUGH AGRARIAN REFORM AND NUMEROUS PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO PROMOTE THE PRODUCTIVITY OF HONDURAN FARM FAMILIES.

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2655

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEGUCIGALPA 1164

COMPLICATING THE ANALYSIS IS THE LIKELIHOOD THAT IMPROVED DELIVERY OF HEALTH SERVICES, I.E., IMMUNIZATIONS, BETTER HYGIENE, IMPROVED FOOD HANDLING, AND THE ABILITY TO SPACE CHILDREN WILL RESULT IN SUBSTANTIAL REDUCTIONS IN MATERNAL AND INFANT MORTALITY. UNLESS FOOD SUPPLIES ARE INCREASED AT A CORRESPONDING RATE-AN EXPENSIVE UNDERTAKING-AND UNLESS THIS IS ACCOMPANIED BY EFFECTIVE FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAMS, THE RESULTS WILL BE AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER FIVE COMPETING FOR THE SAME INADEQUATE SUPPLY OF FOOD. AN INCAP SURVEY IN 1965 ESTIMATED THAT 72.5 PCT OF CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE HAVE SOME DEGREE MALNUTRITION. A 1969 INCAP STUDY ESTIMATES THAT VIRTUALLY ALL CHILDREN IN THE LOWER SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASSES SUFFER FROM SOME FORM OF MALNUTRITION. IT FOLLOWS THAT HONDURANS CAN NOT AFFORD REDUCED INFANT MORTALITY WITHOUT PROGRAMS THAT WILL AVERT CORRESPONDING NUMBERS OF BIRTHS.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

ALTHOUGH THE DOCTRINE OF "EMPTY SPACES" IS POPULAR AND FREQUENTLY ENCOUNTERED, MANY HONDURAN EMPTY SPACES CONTINUE TO RESIST SETTLEMENT, AND THE MORE POPULATED AGRICULTURAL AREAS PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF THE DESTRUCTIVE EFFECTS OF OPEN CROPPING AND SLASHING AND BURNING ON HILLS AND MARGINAL LAND. DISASTROUS FLOODING RESULTING FROM THE DESTRUCTION OF GROUND COVER HAS BECOME COMMON-PLACE.

CONVERSELY, DURING DRY PERIODS IN THE RECENT PAST, DROUGHT CONDITIONS, EXAGGERATED BY OVER-CROPPING, HAVE RESULTED IN CROP SHORTFALLS AND INADEQUACIES IN FOOD PRODUCTION OF CATAS-
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TROPHIC PROPORTIONS.

5- POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC CONSEQUENCES.

HONDURAS, WITH ITS NEIGHBOR EL SALVADOR, ILLUSTRATES THE CLASSIC CONSEQUENCES OF POPULATION GROWTH RATES TOO RAPID TO PERMIT PEACEABLE ACCOMMODATION OF GROWING POPULATION PRESSURE. HONDURAS IS SEEN AS THE VICTIM OF POPULATION PRESSURES BEING EXPERIENCED BY ITS NEIGHBOR.

HOWEVER, THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT THE PRESENT HONDURAN POPULATION GROWTH RATE--ESTIMATED AT 3.5 PERCENT PER ANNUM-- DOES NOT POSE SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN TERMS OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT QUITE ASIDE FROM RELATIONS WITH ITS MORE DENSELY POPULATED NEIGHBOR. THE PROBLEMS INCLUDE INCREASED PRESSURE ON THE GOV FOR BASIC SERVICES AS UNEMPLOYMENT AND URBAN MIGRATION RISE; SHARPENING OF CIVIL CONFLICTS RELATED TO ATTEMPTS BY RURAL POOR TO OCCUPY PRODUCTIVE LAND; AND THE GROWING LIKELIHOOD OF POLITICAL UNSTABILITY WITHIN THE RAPIDLY URBANIZING, UNDEREMPLOYED COMMUNITIES WHICH ARE MOST NOTICEABLE IN THE TWO PRINCIPAL CITIES.

6- AT THE PRESENT TIME THE UNFPA IS REVIEWING THE MOH/AID PROGRAM FOR PROVIDING FAMILY PLANNING AS A PART OF BASIC HEALTH SERVICES

TO THE RURAL AREAS WITH A VIEW TO EVENTUAL UN COLLABORATION.
A FURTHER AREA FOR EMPHASIS AND SUPPORT, POSSIBLY BY THE UN
OR THE POPULATION COUNCIL MIGHT WELL BE WITH ESTABLISHMENT OF
A NATIONAL CAPABILITY TO FOCUS ON AND ANALYZE DEMOGRAPHIC DATA
WITH THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE OF DEVELOPMENT OF A POPULATION POLICY
RECOGNIZING THE NEED TO REDUCE THE EXISTING RAPID GROWTH RATE.
SUCH A CAPABILITY MIGHT BE VESTED IN A COMMITTEE RESPONSIVE TO
THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OR IN AN INDEPENDENT DEMOGRAPHIC
ASSOCIATION.
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